

how can I help my friend



What can I do to help my friend?

REMEMBER

You may be the only person your friend can trust. Be attentive, believe what she says, tell her you care, and show her you are willing to help.

- **Reassure your friend** that she does not cause the abuse. An abuser learned to use violence as a way of maintaining power and control over her long before he/she met your friend.
- **Physical safety is the first priority.** Women frequently minimize the violence because abuse usually gets worse over time. Ignoring the abuse is dangerous. Explain this to your friend and help her to make an emergency safety plan by obtaining transition house phone numbers and discussing safe places or people she knows she can go to considering police and legal protection.
- **Tell your friend she is not alone.** Abuse happens to many women, of all income and educational levels, in all social classes, in all religious and ethnic groups.
- **If she is not ready at this point** to make major changes in her life, do not take your friendship away from your friend. Your support may be what will make it possible for her to act at a later date. Isolation is often the earliest tactic abusive partners use so maintaining connection(s) is vital to safety.
- **Give your friend information about BWSS.** Our 24/7 Crisis and Intake line number is 1.855.687.1868 and our website is bwss.org.
- **Help your friend with her self-esteem.** Tell her what you admire about her; why you value her as a friend; what are her strengths and special qualities.
- **Support her emotions.** Fear, anger, hope, grief in the loss of her relationships, etc.
- **Help with children.** They need support for their feelings, to know the reality of what is going on, to know they are not to blame.
- **Help with Children and other Responsibilities.** Women often are the primary caretakers of children/elders/community and often have other paid/unpaid work responsibilities resulting in a heavy load to carry so think of ways you can help with the load and offer practical help like childcare, ride to work/home, grocery shopping.

Be supportive and willing to listen

- Let your friend know that you believe what she has told you – chances are; the situation is worse than she is letting on.
- Encourage, but do not pressure your friend to talk about the violence. Allow her to say as much or as little as she wants in her own words.
- Offer to accompany her to the police, transition house, or any other place she is frightened to approach for help. Your presence will help her to be strong and will show her that she is not alone.
- No matter how tempting it is to bad-mouth her partner, stop yourself and try to focus on the abuse as the problem. Most women love their partners and want the violence to stop, but they want the relationship to continue.
- Allow your friend to make her own decisions.
- Do not fix or go into advice giving, listen and understand the multitude of emotions she is feeling that are all normal.

REMEMBER

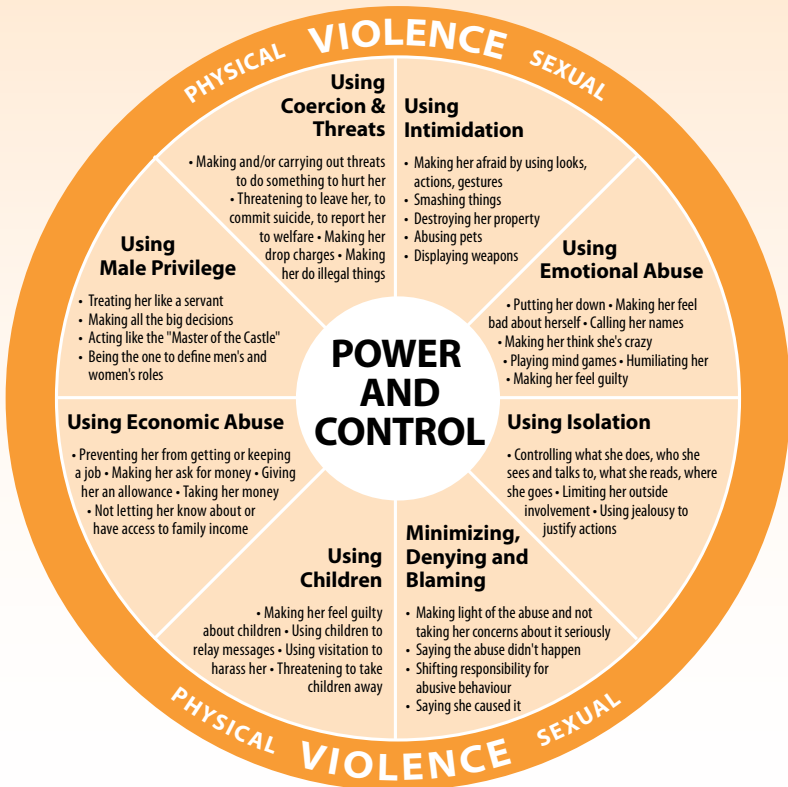
You may be the only person that can see your friend through a life without violence. Don't give up on her – just because the decisions she makes are different from the ones you might make doesn't mean she doesn't want or need your support. If she is not ready to leave at this time, please read page 1 of this brochure. People who use violence do so as a way of controlling their partners. A woman who has been assaulted may come to believe that she can have no control over her life and that her ability to make decisions is flawed. To help her feel more confident and regain control over her life:

Let her know that there are no simple solutions but that change is possible. The first step is to look after her safety.

- Point out different options available to your friend, and help her to evaluate each one. Your role as a friend is to support, not rescue.
- Allow her to decide which option is best for her. If you strongly disagree, remember that it's her life, not yours.
- Let her know that you'll stand by her no matter what

The Power and Control Wheel.

A tool that helps explain the different ways an abusive partner can use different tactics to maintain power and control in a relationship.



DEVELOPED BY:

Domestic Abuse Intervention Project

Help make a safety plan

REMEMBER

Abuse rarely occurs only once and usually gets worse and more frequent with time. Helping to develop a safety plan may be the best way to help your friend protect herself from further harm. And if she doesn't use the plan this time, she may next time, or the time after that.

A safety plan is a plan of action for when an assault occurs, or is about to occur. To help your friend develop a plan which will work for her, the following information is needed:

- When do the assaults usually occur? Are they predictable?
- What does her partner do or say before he/she assaults her?
- Where can she go before an assault occurs to keep her and her children safe? Is there an understanding friend or relative who can provide her shelter?
- Does the presence of a third person reduce the chance that her partner will assault her? If so, can she invite someone into her home over-night?
- If she can't get out before an assault, how can she get help afterwards? Where can she go, who can she call, and how she can get herself to a safe place



You can get more information about safety planning on our website, bwss.org or by safety planning by calling the BWSS Crisis and Intake Line 24/7 at 1.855.687.1868.



The important thing is to help her develop a plan which goes in logical order from the time the assault occurs (or is about to occur) until she reaches safety.

- If you are going to help me... help me to help myself.
- Please be patient while I decide if I can trust you.
- Let me tell my story, the whole story in my own way.
- Please accept that whatever I have done, whatever I may do is the best I have to offer and seemed right at the time.

- I am not “a person.” I am this person, unique and special.
- Don't judge me as right or wrong, bad or good. I am what I am and that's all I've got.
- Don't assume that your knowledge about me is more accurate than mine. You only know what I have told you. That's only part of me.
- Please hear my feelings, not just my words. Accept all of them. If you can't, how can I?
- Don't ever think that you know what I should do. You don't. I may be confused, but I am still the expert about me.
- Don't place me in a position of living up to your expectations. I have enough trouble with mine.
- Don't save me or try to “fix” my situation. I can do it myself. I knew enough to ask for help, didn't I?

Increase your knowledge

REMEMBER

The better informed you are, the better able you will be to help her.

Find out more about the issue of violence against women by contacting a transition house or BWSS. These agencies can also talk with you in confidence about your friend's situation and provide some helpful information.

Make a list of phone numbers of agencies and individuals who can offer services to your friend. Call BWSS for more information about these services.



Please refer to the transition houses' phone directory
on the back cover of this brochure.

Or get more information about safety planning on our website, bwss.org
or by safety planning by calling the BWSS Crisis and Intake Line
24/7 at 1.855.687.1868.



Taking care of yourself

REMEMBER

There are no simple solutions for your friend. If you have a friend who is hurting, don't ignore the violence. You may be the one link she has to a world without violence.

Helping a friend who is in an abusive relationship is often stressful and can be dangerous. You need to look after your own physical and emotional well-being.

Don't confront your friend's partner about the violence. The partner will likely make it even more difficult for you to see your friend and could become violent towards you.

Talk with resource persons about your feelings, fears, frustrations, and reactions to the abuse. You can do this without giving away your friend's name or betraying her confidence in any way.

BWSS receives over 18,000 requests for services annually

BWSS Services and Programs

- **Crisis and Intake**
Line 24/7 1.855.687.1868
- **TTY 604.687.6732**
- **Business 604.687.1868**
- Counselling
- Support Groups
- Victim Services Program
- Legal Advocacy Resources and Services
- AWARE Employment Program
- Black Women's Program
- Latin American Women's Program
- Thrive Program
- Indigenous Women's Program



P.O. BOX 21503
1424 COMMERCIAL DR.
VANCOUVER BC V5L 5G2



**BWSS
FUNDING
PARTNER**

Transition Houses

Abbotsford

Abbotsford Transition House
604.852.6008 or 604.820.8455

Aldergrove

Libra Transition House
604.857.5797 or 604.534.1011

Burnaby

Dixon Transition Society
Dixon House
604.298.3454

Chilliwack

Ann Davis Transition House
604.792.3116 or 604.792.2760

Ann Davis Women's Centre
604.391.1993

Wilma's Transition House
604.858.0468

Coquitlam

Joy's Place Transition House
604.492.1700

Delta

Azure Place
604.957.1556

Langley

Ishtar Transition House
604.530.9442 or 604.534.1011

Maple Ridge

Cythera Transition House
604.467.9966 or 604.467.9939

Mission

Mission Transition House
604.826.7800 or 604.820.8455

New Westminster

Monarch Place
604.521.1888

North Vancouver

Sage Transition House
604.987.3374 or 604.987.0366

Powell River

Grace House
604.485.4554 or 604.485.9773

Richmond

Nova Transition House
604.270.4900 or 604.270.4911

Squamish

Pearl's Place Transition House
604.892.5711 or 1-877.890.5711

Surrey

Virginia Sam Transition House
604.572.5116

Vancouver

Helping Spirit Lodge Transition House
604.872.6649

Kettle Friendship Society Peggy's Place
604.430.5202 or 604.430.6644

Victoria

Victoria Women's Transition House
250.592.2927 or 250.385.6611
